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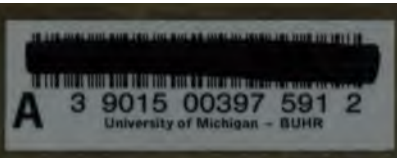

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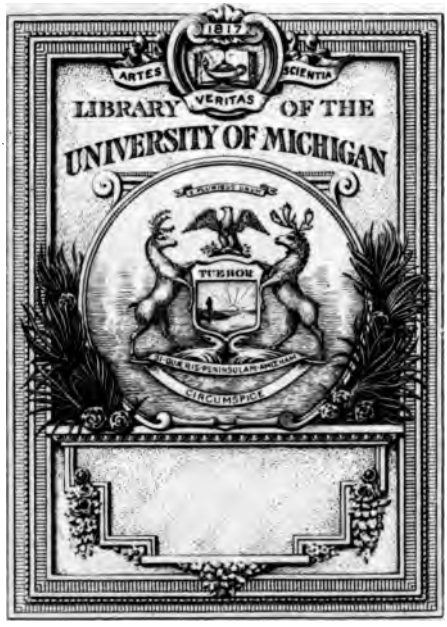
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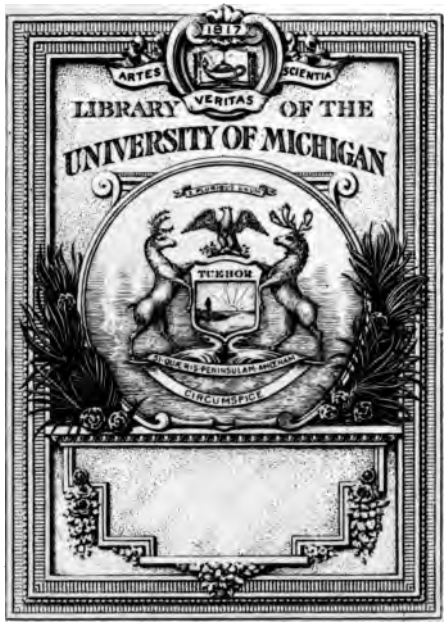
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TRISTRAM & ISEULT

TRISTRAM & ISEULT

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

BY

J. COMYNS CARR

AUTHOR OF

"KING ARTHUR," ETC.

LONDON

DUCKWORTH AND CO.

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CHARACTERS

MARK	*King of Cornwall*
SIR TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE	*His Nephew*
SIR ANDRED . . .	*Cousin to Tristram*
SIR DINAS	*Knights of King Mark's Court*
SIR SAGRAMORE . . .	
GOUVERNAYLE . . .	*Attendant on Tristram*
GORMON	*King of Ireland*
SIR GALLERON . . .	*Knights of Gormon's Court*
SIR MALGRINE . . .	
SIR MORGANORE . . .	
SIR PALAMIDE'S SQUIRE .	
SIR TRISTRAM'S SQUIRE .	
THE MASTER OF THE SHIP	
A SAILOR	
OGRIN THE DWARF . .	
ARGANTHAEL . . .	*Stepmother to Tristram*
OREN	*Queen of Ireland*
ISEULT	*Her Daughter*
BRANGWAINE . . .	*Waiting-woman to Iseult*
ISEULT OF THE WHITE HANDS	

Heralds, Knights, Squires, &c. &c.

ACT I

THE POISONED SPEAR

ACT II

THE HANDS THAT HEAL

ACT III

THE LOVE DRAUGHT

ACT IV

THE WOUND INCURABLE

TRISTRAM & ISEULT.

ACT I.

THE POISONED SPEAR.

SCENE:—*A narrow bay surrounded by rocky shores. At the back to R. a shelving ledge of rock forms a natural quay, by the side of which is moored the ship in which* TRISTRAM *is to set sail for Ireland. The vessel is set diagonally, with its raised stern turned to the audience, the remainder being hidden by a rising wall of rock, behind which it finally glides out of view at the fall of the curtain. Down these rocks to R. descends a steep path leading from the castle, the ramparts of which are seen in perspective. The centre of the stage forms the fringe of the little bay, with projecting rocks screening the view of the water; while to L. is seen the opposite shore of the bay stretching away to the cliffs that overlook the open sea.*

As the curtain rises SAILORS *are seen passing from the ship to the shore.* ANDRED, *accompanied by a* KNIGHT, *descends by the rocky path to R., and as he reaches the level of the stage he is met by* ARGANTHAEL, *who enters L.*

Andred. [*To* KNIGHT.] Go, straightway tell these
Lords from Lyonesse
The King will greet them here.
[*The* KNIGHT *bows, crosses, and goes out L.*

Arganthael. What Lords are these?

Andred. Sir Dinas and his kin who, at this hour
When all is ready, now would pray the King
That Tristram shall not sail!

Arganthael. Aye, and the King
What mood is he in?

Andred. In such a perilous mood
That we, who thought we knew him yesterday,
Had best to-day forget the thing he seemed
And read him o'er again. He now declares
That we, not he, have urged Sir Tristram forth!
And of a truth he hath contrived it so
We have no word to count on.

Arganthael. Nay, no word!
A king indeed were none if he had need
Of words to work his will; and 'tis their grace
Who serve him best that they can best divine
His mute commands. If we for our own ends
Have counselled Tristram's going we have cause!
Doth he not stand as Lord of Lyonesse
And heir to Mark's whole kingdom, blocking that path
Which else my sons might scale to win a crown?
And as for thee dost thou not still recall
How, in that hour when Moraunt flouted thee,
His greater daring left upon thy brow
The brand of coward?

Andred. We have cause enough.
Think not, sweet Arganthael, I have forgot.

[*He approaches her and takes her face between his hands.*

'Twas then our love took birth, when our two hearts,
Scorning those softer ways that lovers use,
Drew lip to lip in secret whispered vows
That sealed his doom.

Arganthael. Yet, Andred, all our cause
Is naught compared to his.

Andred. So had I thought;
Yet now we stand in peril, for these knights
Cry with one voice: should Tristram sail to-day,
The wound he got from Moraunt's poisoned spear
Must end his life!

Arganthael. Well, Sir, and if it be?
Mark will not halt for that. Thou know'st him well.
When Tristram's sword struck Moraunt to the earth
And freed our trembling land, hast thou forgot
That look upon Mark's face? His thin parched lips
Could scarcely frame the sounding words of praise
He dared not then withhold. And day by day
As Tristram grew in fame and those twin beams
Of love and worship, drawn to where he stood,
Left the throne starved and sunless, did'st not note
How wan he grew the while his crafty eyes
Still wooed our deeper hate—willing the end
Yet fearful of the means! I tell thee no,
The King of yesterday still rules to-day;
'Tis only fear that shakes him.

Andred. Look, he comes!

Enter KING MARK, *descending the path to R. attended by two* KNIGHTS *who stand apart.*

Mark. Stands the ship ready?

Andred. See you not, my Lord?
The sailors go aboard.

[*At the back the* SAILORS *are seen passing to and fro from the vessel to the shore.*

Arganthael. They do but wait
Sir Tristram's coming.

Mark. Nay, they wait our word.
He shall not sail to-day.

[ARGANTHAEL *makes a movement as though about to speak.*

Stay, Arganthael,

We have been over hasty in this business.
These knights suspect our purpose.

Arganthael. Would they then
See Tristram die? Have not all cures been sought,
And sought in vain? Yield not to that, my Lord!

Mark. Yea, needs we must! For should we send him forth
And death o'ertake him there, this fatal day
Must stand to our account. All time to come
Will cry—'Twas Mark who sent him to his doom!
So all were doubly lost, for Tristram's fame
Would mould from death a larger memory
Whose worshipped image still would steal away
The light that should be ours!

Enter from L. a SAILOR *in rough and stained garments.*

Why who is here?

Arganthael. He hath a sea-worn visage.

Andred. What seek you, sir?

Sailor. Can any man tell me where dwells the King of this land?

Andred. There, yonder stands his castle.

Sailor. I thank you.

[*He crosses as if to ascend the rocky path.* ANDRED *stops him.*

Andred. Stay, fellow, what would you with the King?

Sailor. That which 'tis fitting he should know, or ill may befall.

Andred. Then speak, for there he stands. [*Pointing to* MARK.]

Sailor. Nay, sir, flout me not. Any clown may know a king when he sees him. In Norway he who rules us stands nobly and is clad in steel.

Andred. Thou art an insolent dog!

Mark. Nay, let him be! Truly, fellow, this knight doth but jest with thee! What seek you with the King? I'll bear thy message.

Sailor. Then prithee, tell me, is there a very valiant knight of this land named Sir Tristram of Lyonesse?

Mark. Aye, so there is!

Sailor. Doth the King love him well as men say?

Mark. There's none dare say he doth not.

Sailor. Then wherefore does this same knight set sail to-day for Ireland?

Mark. And wherefore not?

Sailor. There is one Gormon rules in Ireland, who thinks of nought but how to avenge the death of Sir Moraunt, his son—and hark'ee, e'en as I left the Irish port, this Gormon had, in that very hour, let fly a bloody oath decreeing instant death 'gainst any Cornish lord whose feet should touch the Irish shore. Think you not the King should know of this?

Mark. Truly, and thou thyself shalt tell him. [*Turning to one of his* KNIGHTS.] See that this worthy fellow is well bestowed in the Castle.

Arganthael. [*Aside.*] And well guarded.

Mark. Thou hast told this to none but me?

Sailor. Nay, and of a truth I thought to tell it to none but the King.

Mark. 'Tis well, this lord shall bear thee to him.

Sailor. I thank thee. [*To* ANDRED *as he goes out.*] See you, Sir, you could not beguile me. Now I shall see the King indeed. [*Exit R. with the two* KNIGHTS.

[MARK *stands for a moment alone and silent,* ARGANTHAEL *and* ANDRED *watching him. Then, after a pause, he turns to* ANDRED.

Mark. Bear Tristram hither. [*Exit* ANDRED.

Arganthael. Is it not strange, my lord,
That even this wild fellow from the North
Still prates of Tristram's fame?

Mark. Aye, so he did!
'Tis blown across the world with every wind,
And every wind but bears it back again
With added glory till our deafened ears
Can hear no other sound. But that shall end!
He hath stood betwixt us and our people's love
Like a dark cloud that robs us of the sun.
Yet soon that cloud shall pass: 'tis passing now,
[*The light grows as he speaks.*
See, where those truant beams that seemed to shine
For him alone creep back to kiss our feet,
And mount and mount above his fallen corse
Till all their radiance, that we deemed was lost,
Returns to gild our crown! Nay, Arganthael,
Howe'er these knights may plead our answer stands:
Sir Tristram sails to-day.
Arganthael. Hold fast to that.
And here they come, Sir Dinas and his crew.

Enter L. a group of KNIGHTS *headed by* SIR DINAS DE LIDAN.

Mark. Welcome, Sir Knights, and doubly welcome now
Since well we know ye love Sir Tristram well.
Dinas. My Lord, I would speak for all.
Mark. Stay, Sir, not yet.
First we would speak for thee. In that dark hour
When Cornwall lay in peril, Tristram then
Stood singly forth and bore the brunt of all:
Sir Moraunt's challenge found, and left, ye dumb.
There was not one to answer save this knight
Who dared where none would dare, freeing our land,
Which else had passed 'neath Gormon's bloody sway.
Yet he whose stout arm wrought this miracle
There got from Moraunt's poisoned spear a wound

Which since has sapped his blood! Is there one here
Of all who vaunt their love can heal that wound?
Have we not searched the land and found no cure?
What hope is left? Nought, Sirs, save one alone;
For in that land where Tristram sails to-day
There dwells the fair Iseult, whose healing hands
Are famed through all the world: haply 'tis she
Shall make him whole again. But, see! they come,
Those weeping maids who tend him.

[*A company of* MAIDENS *clad in white descend the winding path to R. They move slowly as they sing, and in their midst lies the wounded* TRISTRAM, *borne upon a litter with* GOUVERNAYLE *walking by his side.*

Chorus.

Bear him sea-ward to that shore
Whence came Moraunt's poisoned spear,
Tristram, he whose wound is sore;
Nought of hope or help is here!

Make him whole as heretofore,
Maiden of the Healing Hands;
Send him homeward, safe once more,
Tristram loved of all our lands.

[*At the finish* TRISTRAM *raises himself on the litter supported by* GOUVERNAYLE.

Tristram. My Lord, I did not look for this farewell.
Mark. Nor we, whose love had thought to bind thee here,
Still ever at our side, our chosen heir!
Yet so God wills it; for that grievous wound
Still eats thy life away, and nought is left

But this one hope forecast by Gondoine :
"In that wild land, whence came that poisoned spear,
There lies all hope of healing, there, not here."
So speaks that sage's voice.
Tristram. Ah ! Good my Lord
I have no hope of healing ! Well I know
This wound I bear is mortal.
Dinas. Pray you then,
Let him not venture forth ! Here in our land
Are those who love him and will tend him well
Whatever fate befall him.
Tristram. Peace, Sirs, Peace !
Ye know not what ye ask. Though all the land
Sought with one voice to stay me, 'twere in vain.
I still would sail to-day. This wound I bear
Was dealt by Moraunt, and for all its pains
I think there's but one end. Yet, e'er that comes,
There is a deeper wound I fain would heal,
A wound this hand hath wrought.
Gouvernayle. My master, no !
That hand is stainless and the sword it bears
Struck Moraunt to the earth.
Tristram. Aye, so it did !
And by that blow hath stirred this endless strife
Betwixt his land and ours.
Dinas. Wherefore the more
We pray you : go not forth to that far land
Where only hate may dwell.
Mark. Nay, fear not that !
If aught of ill befall him in that land,
Our swords shall speak in answer. Gormon knows
Our ships like hounds in leash but wait one word
To leap from wave to wave, from shore to shore,
Till we stand face to face.
Tristram. Sire, not that way
Shall peace be won ! Could'st thou stand here with me

Beneath death's shadowing wing, thine eyes like mine
Would learn to pierce the folded veil of time
And read its secret. Truly spake that voice—
That only there whence came that poisoned spear
Dwells our last hope of healing: not for me
Whose wound may count for nought, but for our land
Which now lies stricken and must bleed to death
Unless that wound be staunched which my hand wrought
When Moraunt fell. For blood cries out for blood,
And this long feud 'twixt Ireland and thee,
Devouring both our lands, shall never cease,
Save by the sweeter grace of her whose hands
Bear healing with them.

Mark. Would you have us sue
Of this proud King, and crave on bended knee
That he should show us mercy?

Tristram. Nay, not so!
A King may kneel, but only to a Queen.
I'd have thee sue of her who shall be Queen!
Iseult of Ireland, King Gormon's child,
Whom all men count the fairest maid on earth,
For in her face as in a faultless flower,
Is gathered up all beauty. Kneel to her!
Is she not worthy to be crowned thy Queen?

Mark. Thou art mine heir, I have no need to wed.

Tristram. I am thine heir. Then none hath so good right
To crave this boon of thee. Let me go forth
As thine ambassador to win this maid,
So shall I die as I had hoped to live
In serving thee, and so in this last act
Bring peace once more 'twixt Gormon's throne and thine.

Mark. We know not how to answer. All our dream
Centres in thee. Yet from thy loyal thought

Springs a new hope that bids us grant thy prayer;
For Gormon's lust of vengeance needs must halt
In face of this sweet message: Look you, Sirs,
Ye who but late did bid Sir Tristram stay,
What say ye now?

Arganthael. My Lord, let him go forth.
It is thy people's will that thou should'st wed;
Yet 'tis not this that moves me, for I see
In this proud embassy a surer hope
For Tristram's life.

Mark. Dinas, what sayest thou?

Dinas. My Lord, we stand by thee.

Mark. [*To* TRISTRAM.] Then take thy way:
Yet know ye all, our love would hold him here—
'Tis but the dearer wish, that in that land,
His wound may find a cure, that bids us yield;
'Tis that one thought alone that sends thee forth
To win this royal maid. Yet hearken all:
No welcome waits for any Queen on earth
Save and if fate should will that thou thyself,
Made whole once more, should bear her back to us.

Gouvernayle. My Lord, they hoist the sail!

Tristram. Stay, Gouvernayle,
Halt here awhile.

[*He motions the bearers to leave him and* GOUVERNAYLE *goes up stage, then he turns to* MARK.

Wilt thou draw near to me?
I cannot rise to thee. [MARK *approaches him.*
Here, ere I go,
I would one last assurance of thy love.

Mark. [*With averted eyes.*] Thou hast it all. What need to question it?

Tristram. Sick thoughts will oft-times haunt a sick man's brain.

I dreamed last night that loyal love was dead,
And I the cause.

Mark. Most surely thou didst dream.

Tristram. That love endures ?

Mark. And shall, till death shall end it.
Yet tarry not, the sail sits shoulder high,
And every wasted moment steals from hope
Its promised dower.

Tristram. That dower lies in thy love
Which still stands all in all ; and here I swear
To win that Royal maid to be thy bride,
Or in thy wooing end a wasted life.
So bear me on.

[*As* TRISTRAM *is borne to the ship the group of* MAIDENS *take up again the last verse of the Chorus, and while they sing,* TRISTRAM *is seen standing on the poop of the vessel, supported by* GOUVERNAYLE.

Arganthael. [*Aside to* MARK.] Look on his face once more—
For the last time.

Tristram. [*From the ship.*] My lord, farewell ! Farewell !

Mark. For the last time, farewell !

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

THE HANDS THAT HEAL.

SCENE :—*Hall in the Palace of King Gormon in Ireland. To R. an open arcade with columns through which is seen a view of rocks and sea. In the centre is a recessed alcove in which is set* TRISTRAM'S *couch. It is screened by curtains which are drawn back when the act opens. To L.C. two great doors, which open to the lists where the tournament is taking place.*

1st Knight. How fares it now?
2nd Knight. In truth most ill, my Lord.
Our knights are overmatched: this pagan Lord,
Sir Palamide the Saracen, whose shield
Doth bear for sole device the face of death,
Still stands the conqueror.
1st Knight. What knights are left
For this last day's encounter?
2nd Knight. As I came
I saw Sir Lamorack with lifted helm,
Hopeless yet fearless, ride into the lists
To face Sir Palamide.
1st Knight. Aye, and after him?
2nd Knight. Sir Galleron of Galway, he stands first
Of those that yet remain; Sir Malgrine next,
And next and last the brave Sir Morganore,
In whom lies all our hope.
[*The great gates to L. open and the trumpet is heard.*
Nay, heard you that?
The end draws swiftly.

Enter through doors KING GORMON *with* QUEEN OREN, *followed by* KNIGHTS *and* DAMES, *and last* MORGANORE, GALLERON *and* MALGRINE.

King. Where is Morganore?
Morganore. I'm here, my Lord!
King. Tis well, and Malgrine too!
Aye, and Sir Galleron! we need ye all.
What stands upon the hazard of this hour
We may not now withhold. When Palamide
First challenged all our knights, then straight for all
We answered him, nor deemed that ill could chance.
Oren. Nor then had cause, for then Sir Moraunt lived.
King. Aye! and full many another in whose strength,
That oft' had proven true, we set our trust!
Have we done wrongly? Ye shall answer that,—
Ye three who still remain the last of all
To save our land; for in that boastful hour,
Undoubting of their valour who have fallen,
We pledged our oath that should this paynim knight
Prove victor at the close, he then might claim
What boon soe'er he willed: and now 'tis said
His courage runs so high he will demand
The hand of fair Iseult.
Oren. Yea, of a truth!
A curse lies on the land since Moraunt died!
Morganore. [*Kneeling before the* KING.] My Lord, we are less than Moraunt! Who would dare
To stand his equal? Aye, and less than those
This knight hath overborne; yet here we vow
While breath remains, we will not flinch nor yield
To proud Sir Palamide! This word for all.

[*Doors L. open, and trumpet heard without. Enter* HERALD.

Herald. Sir Lamorack rides beaten from the field;
The challenge sounds again!

Morganore. And we are here!

King. Then take this last word with ye: if God will
That one amongst ye three should here prevail
Against this Pagan knight, then that reward
Which else were his, we freely yield again
To him who smites him down. Nay, Sirs, and more!
If any Christian knight within our realm,
Whoe'er he be, unhorse this Saracen—
Our oath stands firm; what gift he wills to ask
We needs must grant, even though the chosen prize
Should prove our daughter's hand.

[*Challenge sounds again.*

Morganore. For fair Iseult!

Galleron. For God and thee!

Malgrine. For God and fair Iseult!

[*Exeunt* MORGANORE, MALGRINE, *and* GALLERON *with their* SQUIRES *and* ATTENDANTS. *As the great doors close the strains of a harp are heard through the open columns to R.*

King. Where is she now?

Oren. Iseult? What need to ask
Those silken sounds make answer. Since that day
This stranger Lord came drifting to our shores,
Though no man knows what knightly name he bears,
She hath no thought but how to heal his wound.

Brangwaine. Hour upon hour she sits beside the sea
The while he harps to her.

King. [*To* BRANGWAINE.] Go, bring her thither.

[*Exit* BRANGWAINE.

That must be told which until yesterday
We hoped to hide for ever. Would we owned
But half her magic art, and so might heal
The wound that waits her now!

Oren. Ah! rather think
Had Moraunt lived there were no wound to heal!
For though he stood the last of all our knights
We should not fear nor falter, knowing his arm
Would shield her from this shame.
King. Enough! Enough!
We cannot wake the dead!
Oren. Nay, but the dead
May wake the living! For his blood is ours,
And cries aloud for vengeance. Thou wert by,
The night they bore him hither, when these hands
Searching his mortal wound, drew forth at last
This splintered fragment of that traitor's sword,
Whose hand had slain him! Look on it again!
[*She draws from her bosom a fragment of broken steel, which she wears attached to a chain.*
Here, ever next my breast, from that dread hour
Hath lain this broken steel, whose icy touch
Yet feeds my heart's one flame, one sole desire—
To find the murderer out and strike him down.
What wonder then, at this our hour of need,
I dream again of vengeance?
King. Ah, no more!
Think not that I forget! I, whose mad vow
Is like to lose all that is left to us.

Enter ISEULT, *followed by* BRANGWAINE.

Iseult. My Lord, thou did'st send for me?
King. Aye, so I did.
Something there was I had in mind to say,
But now 'tis flown.
Iseult. It will come back again.
I may not tarry now; that knight I tend
Waits for me there below. To-day I dreamed
His malady was ended; near the dawn
His eyes turned seaward, and his parted lips

Moved as though shaping a forgotten name!
I scarce dared breathe, but listened, thinking at last
That memory, his fevered wound had wrecked,
Would grow to life once more, and we should learn
From whence he came and what proud name he bears.
But on a sudden all grew dark again.
He spake no word, but turned with trembling hands
And clutched the harp. Hark you! that softer strain
Doth tell he needs me. [*She moves to go.*

Oren. Stay, child, go not yet,
We too have need of thee! Can'st thou not see
The King is sorely troubled?

Iseult. [*Returning to* GORMON *and laying her hand upon his shoulder.*] Is it so?
Why then, I'll tend thee too; and these same hands
That coaxed the poison from his graver wound,
Shall chase thy cares away.

King. I would they could!

Iseult. First I must know thy pain?

[*Trumpet heard without.*

Oren. Dost hear that cry?
And yet would question him? Can'st thou not guess
What bitter shame doth here afflict us both?
In this great tournament that ends to-day
One after one the mightiest of our knights
Have yielded to this paynim Lord, whose spear
Bears all before him.

Iseult. Aye, so Brangwaine said.
Yet more remain! the brave Sir Morganore
And Malgrine too! They are not worsted yet!
And though they were, methinks 'twere not enough
To breed that look of torment in thine eyes.
Nay, do not turn away! There's something more
Doth lurk beneath what's told. Is there some prize
This lord may win thou hast no heart to pay?

King. Aye, child, there is!
Iseult. Yet never grieve at that.
Our land is rich; he cannot beggar us!
King. Yea, but he can! For this rich prize he claims
Is more than all the jewels in our crown.
Iseult. What may that be? Ah! tell me.

The doors open, trumpet sounds, and HERALD *enters, followed by* PALAMIDE'S SQUIRE.

Herald. Good my Lord,
Sir Galleron hath fallen; Sir Palamide
Now cries a halt and sends his Squire hither
To ask a boon of thee.
Squire. [*Kneeling to the* KING.] King Gormon, hail!
My master gives thee greeting and doth crave
Thy presence in the field, that at the end
When all have fallen, in the face of all
He there may claim by warrant of thine oath
That sweet reward that crowns his victory,
The hand of Fair Iseult!
Iseult. Was this the prize?
Oh Sir, 'tis roughly told! And yet I know not!
That sentence had it fallen from thy lips
Perchance had hurt me more. [*Turning to* SQUIRE.
Thy master, Sir,
Should be a valiant knight. Then tell him this—
What's won by force must needs be held by force.
No gentler bond shall stand betwixt us twain:
I have no will to wed.
Squire. Most royal maid,
Whate'er my Lord shall win is held for thee,
And in thy service. So this day shall prove.
For here he doth declare, on oath made good,
That, should this last encounter yield him all,
He will straightway take upon him Christian vows.

And furthermore, in worship of thy name,
He will not rest till, searching through the world,
He finds Sir Tristram, Lord of Lyonesse,
And there upon his body doth avenge
The murder of thy brother.

Oren. Now, in faith,
This is a valiant knight! For all that's gone
That vow may make amends.

Iseult. No, it may not.
I have no will to wed.

Oren. That will shall come.
Let vengeance fill the unborn springs of love
'Till every drop of Morannt's wasted blood
So lights the flame of passion in thy veins
That thou shalt take this warrior to thine arms
And call him Lord! Here, beside Morannt's bier
Thou too did'st take that oath that binds us all.
Dost thou not still remember?

Iseult. All too well!
And see his dead face now. Yet God hath willed
These hands were made for healing, not for hurt.
For so that gift in dreaming long ago
Was borne to me by one whose fairer face
Yet mirrored mine; with eyes so like mine own
That as I gazed in them it seemed as though
I saw myself again. And since that hour
All the dumb creatures of our woods, whose pains
The hunter heeds not—all have sought me out;
The fallen bird with broken quivering wing,
The limping hare, the bleeding stricken fawn,
And I have healed them all. 'Twas so, my Lord,
I won that art that all the land hath blessed.
I would not, therefore, that my marriage vow
Were writ in blood.

[TRISTRAM'S *harp heard softly again*

See now, how I forget

That one who needs me most!

[*She turns to go and meets* GOUVERNAYLE.

Gouvernayle. Lady, my Lord
Grows weary and would sleep.

Iseult. Aye, so he shall;
Sleep is a sovereign cure!

Enter 2nd HERALD.

2nd Herald. Sir Malgrine waits,
And ready harnessed doth but need thy sign.

Iseult. Then all is not yet lost. Sire, when it is
Be sure I shall not fail thee. Fare thee well.

[*Exit* ISEULT.

King. Go, let the challenge sound. Tell Palamide
We'll straightway to the field, and at the close,
Whate'er befall, our oath shall stand as now.

[*Exeunt L.* KING, KNIGHTS *and* COURTIERS, *leaving* OREN *and* BRANGWAINE.

Oren. Did'st note her, Brangwaine? In her pitying eyes
There dwells no memory of Sir Moraunt's death.
Her thoughts set all one way—What is this knight
Whose very name we know not?

Brangwaine. Who can tell?
The fever that was like to end his life
Hath left the past a blank; where none may read—
Not he himself—what once was written there.

Oren. Yet I would read it.

Brangwaine. Oft-times, as he plays,
The echoing music of his harp calls back
Stray memories of forgotten days that fall
Like scattered beads from off a broken string;
And once it chanced, I do remember well,
He sang of some great battle past and gone,
Wherein I since have thought he took that wound
Her skill hath healed. Iseult crept to his side

With cheeks of flame and trembling lips that hung
On every word; then rising at the close
She prayed her eyes might look upon that sword
Had wrought such valiant deeds.

Oren. And then! What then?

Brangwaine. Why, then a sudden cloud fell on his brow
And he denied her.

Oren. Wherefore did he so?

Brangwaine. I know not, Madame.

Oren. Brangwaine, we shall know!
Aye, and this very hour. But yester-night
A withered crone stood by the castle gate,
And as I passed she croaked this in mine ear—
"The light of Erin's poisoned spear
Shall draw that wounded warrior near."
What if this knight her care hath won to life
Should prove none other than that Cornish Lord
Who struck Sir Moraunt down! Where hangs this sword?

Brangwaine. He guards it closely ever at his side,
Safe locked within its scabbard.

Oren. Yet to-day
We'll draw it from its hiding. [*Harp heard again.*
See you, now
She leads him hither! 'Tis his hour for rest.
Wait for her here; then bid her give him this.
[*She hands* BRANGWAINE *a small phial.*
It hath a virtue that persuades to sleep,
And when all's still I'll creep beside his couch
And draw that naked blade from out its sheath.
If then I find it lacks this splintered steel,
He shall not wake again, for these same hands
Shall send Sir Moraunt's murderer to his doom.
[*Exit* OREN *softly, leaving* BRANGWAINE *standing by the curtained opening.*

Enter TRISTRAM *and* ISEULT.

Tristram. I'll hear it from thy lips; some passing cloud
Hath dimmed the tranquil summer in thine eyes,
And I would know the cause.

Iseult. First thou shalt sleep.

Tristram. I am not weary now.

Iseult. Nay, Sir, thou art.
And when thy sleep is ended then perchance
I'll try to tell thee all.

Brangwaine. Madame, the Queen
Did bid me give thee this—it hath a charm
That wins all eyes to sleep.

Iseult. Now see you, Sir,
We must obey the Queen. I thank thee, Brangwaine.
[*Then aside to her.*
Go quickly forth and bear me word again
If any hope be left! None lingers here!

Brangwaine. I will, sweet mistress. [*Exit L.*

[ISEULT *stands as though lost in reverie.* TRISTRAM *approaches her.*

Tristram. Would I owned thy power!
That so the patient might become the leech,
And cure his stricken nurse; for that sweet skill
That drew the poison from my wounded breast
Hath lodged it in thine own. Is this life's law?
Is health so dearly bought that what is won
Proves but a robbery from that purer source
That did bestow the gift? Then give me back
The wound those hands have healed, that so mine eyes
May see thee smile again.

Iseult. 'Twere all in vain.
Nor thine, nor mine, nor any hand may heal
That wound I bear. There is no hope from death;
And he was dead ere yet they bore him hither,
Ere yet these hands had touched him.

Tristram. He was dead?

Iseult. Aye, Moraunt. It was here they laid him down,
Here in this hall.

Tristram. Doth that black memory
Still haunt thy soul? I thought 'twas past and done.

Iseult. I thought so too, but now it lives again.
Those lifeless eyes renew their vacant gaze,
And that dread oath of blood my halting lips
Scarce dared to whisper then, I now could cry
Aloud to all the world. Aye, sir, and more,
For were he here, that caitiff knight who slew him,
I'd yield what healing power these hands have owned
And pray their touch were mortal.

Tristram. Wherefore now?
What is it now that stirs thy gentler heart
And turns thy tears to rage?

Iseult. Were Moraunt here
There were no need for tears! Had Moraunt lived
This Pagan knight who lords it over all
Were beaten to the dust, nor then would dare
To name that prize which now he is like to win.

Tristram. Is it so much he wins?

Iseult. Not much, yet all
To her who yields it all.

Tristram. Then 'tis for thee
The lists are set? For thee those fallen knights
Have fought in vain? Thou dost not answer me,
Yet well I know 'tis so; thou art the prize
This Pagan lord hath set his heart to win.

Iseult. So poor a prize.

Tristram. So poor! Ah, hear me now.
I too would curse the hour when Moraunt died,
And curse the hand that slew him.

Iseult. What have I done?

Tristram. 'Tis not what thou hast done! When doth it end,
This hapless tournament?
Iseult. 'Tis ending now.
Within the hour the final challenge sounds.
Tristram. And all have right to enter?
Iseult. Aye, Sir, all
Who at the close can prove their knightly name.
Tristram. Go leave me now. Bid Gouvernayle come hither,
I may have need of him.
Iseult. Ah! no, not yet,
Not till I see thee sleep! I have undone
All that these hands have wrought. I pray thee rest.
Tristram. Ay, so I would! and find once more the way
That leads to sleep. 'Tis thou shalt harp me there.
For thou alone can'st guide my feet again
To that lost land of dreams. Harp on, harp on!

[*He throws himself on the couch and* ISEULT *sits by his side and sings to him.*

Iseult. [*Sings.*] Night that bears all healing
For the wounds of day,
Night so softly stealing
Bear his soul away.

Where the white moon creeping
O'er thy silvered lawns
There shall find him sleeping
When a new day dawns.

[*As he lies upon the couch as if in sleep the hall gradually darkens. At the close she rises and gazes upon him, drawing the curtains as she speaks.*

At last he sleeps. How easily he rests!

If aught did vex his soul 'tis vanished now
And all forgotten.

[*Voices of unseen spirits are heard singing.*

Chorus.

Whiter than the moon are her hands that shall enfold him,
Darker than the night is that land wherein she dwells.
Thither shall she bear him and there thine eyes behold him,
There when all is ended in the last of last farewells.

[*During this Chorus the* VISION *of* ISEULT OF THE WHITE HANDS *gradually appears through the drawn curtains.*

Iseult. Whence come those sweet sounds
That fill the air? And thou, whose paler face
Is fashioned like mine own, who art thou? Speak!

Vision. My name is thine, I too am called Iseult,
Iseult of the White Hands, whose marble touch
Like thine hath power to heal. And where I dwell,
In that far moonlit land towards whose pale coast
All sails shall run for haven at the last,
There too at last the sobbing seas shall bear him,
And thou shalt seek him there. Yet, hearken now
And store it in thy heart against that hour
Thou shalt have need of it: whom thou hast healed,
Though all unknowing, thou shalt wound again;
Whom thou hast wounded I alone may cure.
Nay, ask no more, the end shall answer all.

[*The* VISION *fades with a repeat of the unseen* CHORUS. *At the end* ISEULT *rises.*

Iseult. Whom thou hast healed him thou shalt wound again.
Ah no! Ah no!

Enter GOUVERNAYLE *quickly through doors L.*

Gouvernayle. Madam, the end is near,
Malgrine hath fared no better than his fellows.
There yet remains but one, Sir Morganore.
Where is my master?

Iseult. Hush, Sir, wake him not.

Gouvernayle. I would some voice could wake him! Then I think
Sir Morganore were not the last to face
This Pagan Lord.

Iseult. Wherefore the more I pray
He may sleep on! I would not for the world
That he rode forth to-day, where, if he fell,
Then I should know for sure it was my hand
That wrought his wound. See! When he wakes again
Bid him take this, 'twill win him back to sleep.

[*She gives him the phial, then aside as she goes out.*

Whom thou hast wounded I alone may cure!
Is there no cure for me? [*Exit R.*

Gouvernayle. Now of a truth
That wound is deep already, and 'tis thou
Hath struck the blow! Yea, for thy sorcery,
Undoing all thy healing art had won,
Hath set new venom in that festering spot
Where dwelt a loyal heart. He whom I served
I know no longer, and those fearless eyes
That never quailed at death, now lurk and hide
Beneath a traitor's mask. Awake! Awake!
Awake Sir Tristram, Lord of Lyonesse,
It is thy King that calls thee, 'tis thine oath;
Hast thou forgotten all? Awake! Awake!

[*He springs towards the curtain, but as he does so* TRISTRAM *draws it aside and stands revealed in armour.*

Gouvernayle. My Lord, thy pardon.
Tristram. Nay, Sir, spare all words.
Where is my Squire?

Enter SQUIRE *hurriedly L.*

Ah! thou art here! What now?
Squire. Sir Morganore is like to lose the day.
All eyes are turned upon the King who stands
As one who rules a realm of shattered dreams.
Tristram. Go bid the Herald sound another challenge—
The last of all! Go quickly! Wait me there.
[*Exit* SQUIRE.

[GOUVERNAYLE *takes* TRISTRAM'S *sword and approaches him.*

Gouvernayle. Let these hands gird it round thee.
Tristram. Not that sword,
'Twere evil augury to wield for her
The blade that wrought her woe—see, this will serve.

[*He lays his own sword in its sheath on the seat outside the curtained alcove and draws* GOUVERNAYLE'S *from its scabbard.*

Gouvernayle. God send thee victory!
Tristram. Nay, Gouvernayle,
There is no victory! Whate'er is won
I needs must yield again—so stands my vow.
Ah, would that I were bound to some base Lord
And not to him I serve, whose loyal love
Compels my love again! Yet that were nought!
Though all were mine to win, yet all were lost
The hour she learned the hated name of him
Who slew Sir Moraunt. And that hour must come.
Not yet! Not yet! If she should ask of me,
Say that I drank of this and fain would sleep
The long night through.

[*He empties the phial on the ground.*

The SQUIRE *enters and the challenge sounds without.*

Squire. The challenge sounds, my Lord.
The lists are ready.

Tristram. Sir, and so am I.
There is no hour to lose; the waning day
Draws swiftly to its close; the end is near,
Nor shall I fail thee there.

[*Exit* TRISTRAM *with his Squire.*

[*The slanting rays of light take a sunset glow.*

Gouvernayle. At last! At last!
Sir Tristram lives again.

[GOUVERNAYLE *takes his stand by the drawn curtains, as the sound of the challenge is heard without.* ISEULT *enters R.*]

Iseult. Dost hear that cry?
The final challenge sounds, yet none remain,
To answer for me now! How fares thy master?

Gouvernayle. Lady, he fares well. His wound, methinks,
Is cured at last. See you, he bade me say
He had done thy bidding. [*Holding up empty phia..*

Iseult. Then he sleeps again?

[*She approaches the curtains, but* GOUVERNAYLE *intercepts her.*

Gouvernayle. And would not be disturbed.

Iseult. Nay, have no fear.
I will not wake him. Go, Sir, leave me now
And tell my Lord the King when all is done
I shall await him here. [GOUVERNAYLE *hesitates.*
Did'st hear me, Sir?
Till then I'll guard thy master. [*Exit* GOUVERNAYLE.
Aye, till then!
It is not long to wait, and yet too long;
For all the vanished dreams of all my life
Come trooping to this little nook of time,

To take their leave of me. And all lie there,
All buried there with him who heeds them not.
Yet should I dare to gaze upon that face
That is their grave, they'd grow to life again
And cheat my heart again. Yea, but I will—
For the last time, the last.

She holds the curtain as though about to lift it when OREN *enters.*

Oren. Sir Minstrel sleeps?

Iseult. He woke but once and now he sleeps again,
The charm was thine. [*Holding up the emptied phial.*

Oren. But thine the sweeter skill
First cured his wound.

Iseult. Aye, it is cured at last;
He needs no service now.

Oren. Yet ere he goes
Would'st thou not learn the name of this brave knight
Thy care hath won to life.

Iseult. Indeed I would.

[OREN *approaches her stealthily and points backward to the sword.*

Oren. Then draw that sword, methinks 'twill tell thee all.

Iseult. No! No! That may not be.

Oren. And wherefore not?

Iseult. Not two days past I sought to see that blade
And he denied me.

Oren. Why did he do so?

Iseult. I know not.

Oren. Then I'll tell thee: writ in blood
Upon that sword-blade stands Sir Moraunt's name.

Iseult. [*In terror.*] What would'st thou say?

Oren. Why this! There on that couch,
Drugged in a sleep that knows no haunting dream,
There lies thy brother's murderer.

Iseult. Ah, no!

Oren. Draw forth that sword and prove it!

Iseult. [*Hesitates.*] Nay, I cannot!

Oren. Then I will draw it.

Iseult. No.

[*She makes a movement to stop her.*

Oren. Away! 'Tis done!

[*She draws the sword which reveals the broken blade. With a cry of triumph she approaches* ISEULT.

Those eyes were fain to see this trusty sword,
Then look upon it now, and wonder not
He did deny thee! 'Twere not much to show!
Poor broken blade, and was thy master shamed
To bare thee to the world? Nay, while he sleeps
We'll quick repair the fault. Why now 'tis done!

[*She breaks off the fragment from the chain upon her neck and fits it in the vacant space, forcing* ISEULT *to gaze upon it.*

Iseult. Cast it away.

Oren. Nay, take it in thy hand,
And grip it well. It was Sir Tristram's sword.
To-day 'tis thine; he yields it up to thee.
That hand hath healed him, won him back to life,
Then 'tis for thee to take that life again.

Iseult. Ah no! I dare not.

Oren. Dare not? Art afraid?

Iseult. These hands were made for healing, not for hurt.

Oren. And mine for vengeance.

[*Snatches the sword from* ISEULT *and moves quickly towards couch.* ISEULT *seizes her.*

Iseult. No, thou shalt not!

Oren. Why?

[*They face one another.* ISEULT'S *eyes drop.*

Iseult. I know not, yet thou shalt not!

Oren. Out on thee! [*Flinging her to her knees.*]
Not all the world should stay me!
[*She rushes to curtain and draws it aside, finding the empty couch.*
What is this?

Iseult. Not there!

Oren. Not there! Oh, craven coward knight,
That dared not wait to claim thy last desert!
Dost think that this can save thee? Nay, not so,
The King shall know the truth. From out our ports
No ship shall sail till vengeance claims its due.
[*She rushes off entrance down L., leaving* ISEULT *on her knees.*
[*Cries are heard without amidst the blare of trumpets.*

Iseult. The end hath come at last! What matters now,
For all is lost.

Enter BRANGWAINE *hurriedly.*

Brangwaine. Sweet lady, all is won.
Look up and stay thy tears; there at the last
When Morganore had fallen, a stranger knight,
Clad in white armour, rode into the lists
And wrested from that Pagan Lord his shield.
Aye, and his spear, and cast him to the earth.

Iseult. What stranger may that be?

Brangwaine. That none can tell,
His name is kept till now. But see, the King
Draws hither with the Court. To him at last
This valiant Lord must needs declare his name.
[*Amid growing cries of victory, the* KING *and all the* KNIGHTS *and* DAMES *enter and fill the hall.*

King. My child, our land is freed and so art thou.
Where is this stranger? Go, Sir, bring him here.

Herald. He comes, my Lord.

TRISTRAM *enters, and as he lifts his helm reveals his face to* ISEULT.

Iseult. [*Aside.*] Too late! 'Twere better far
That he had fallen too.
King. We thank thee, Sir,
Not for ourselves alone, but most of all
For her who owes thee all; and there she stands!
The fair Iseult, who but an hour ago
We thought to lose for ever. Think not then
We seek with empty service of mere words
To pay our heavier debt. Not so, Sir Knight!
By this great victory, thou dost inherit
The advantage of that oath was sworn to him
Whom thou hast conquered. That same right is thine;
Then claim what boon thou wilt. We needs must yield
Whate'er thy tongue shall ask.
Tristram. There is no boon
That I have right to ask.
King. Yea, but there is
That right sits in thy sword. Then speak thy will.

Enter HERALD *quickly.*

Herald. My Lord, there waits without a Cornish Lord
Who claims thy favour.
King. Nay, no favour waits
For any Cornish Lord, unless perchance
He wearies of his life.

Enter ANDRED.

What seek you here?
Andred. I seek Sir Tristram, Lord of Lyonesse.

[*The* QUEEN *has entered, holding* TRISTRAM'S *broken sword in her hand.*

King. We know him not, or know him only as a coward knight
Whom we do wait to slay.

Oren. Not so, my Lord,
We know him well! and here I yield him back
That traitor's sword that struck Sir Moraunt down.

Iseult. Ah, say it is not thine.

King. Declare thy name!

Tristram. My name is Tristram, Lord of Lyonesse.

Iseult. Then all was true!

All. Now let the traitor die!

Andred. Aye, traitor truly! Where, Sir, is thy trust,
Where stands that pledge thou gavest to King Mark?

Tristram. I do discharge it here.
[*Turning to* GORMON.
Here, before all,
I who have won this day, now claim that boon
Thy lips may not refuse.

Oren. No boon but death!
A curse upon thee and thy master too.

All. Yea, let him die!

King. Nay, Sirs, our oath must stand.
[*Turning to* TRISTRAM.
What is that boon?

Tristram. Thy daughter, fair Iseult!
[ISEULT *starts forward.* TRISTRAM *continues.*
To be the royal bride of him I serve.
[ISEULT *swoons in the arms of* BRANGWAINE *as the curtain falls.*

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

THE LOVE DRAUGHT.

SCENE:—*On board the* "Swallow." *The front of the stage is occupied by the centre of the ship, where* ISEULT'S *cabin is situated. At the back is the raised forepart of the vessel, the tall mast rising from the upper deck. At the opening of the act the large sail is lowered, disclosing in the sky the glimmerings of a grey dawn, with a view of the sea after storm. The light grows gradually as the act progresses. During the chorus with which it opens the* SAILORS *are seen hoisting the sail, which has been lowered during the hurricane.* GOUVERNAYLE *is down stage.* TRISTRAM, *at the back, leans over the side of the ship, with eyes turned seaward.*

SAILORS' CHORUS.

Above the mast one single star
Still loiters in the dawn,
Beyond the dusk one lamp afar
Burns on an upland lawn.
Then a little more! and a little way!
Yeo ho! Hearts! Ho! Yeo ho!
Ere the Swallow's bows shall round the bay,
Yeo ho! Hearts! Ho! Yeo ho!
Haul away!

Across the scudding gale one cry
Comes seaward o'er the foam!

One voice that sobbing bade good-bye
Now laughing calls us home!
Then a little way! and a little more!
Yeo ho! Hearts! Ho! Yeo ho!
Ere the Swallow's keel shall touch the shore,
Yeo ho! Hearts! Ho! Yeo ho!
Haul away!

Gouvernayle. [*To the* MASTER *of the ship, who approaches him from the upper deck.*] Is the storm spent?

Master. Aye! 'tis rattled out at last! God be praised!

Gouvernayle. Shall we not then hoist the sail once more and make the land?

Master. They are about it, sir. Hear you not? These fellows have already the taste of Cornish sand in their mouths, who but an hour agone were like to have drunk too deep of the brine.

Gouvernayle. In truth the night was rank. It seemed as though the heavens would split and fall into the sea.

Master. We who have seen it shall not live to encounter its fellow. [*Crying to the* SAILORS.] Cheerly, my hearts, cheerly! [*He comes down again to* GOUVERNAYLE *and speaks in lower voice.*] 'Twas whispered amongst 'em that this Irish maid had set a spell upon the ship, and that we should find no port but the oozy bed of the sea.

Gouvernayle. Would they so speak of her who shall be their Queen?

Master. And yet a woman withal, Queen or no! Mark you that. And wondrous fair, as you'll say? Aye, but so are they that dwell in the hollow of the whirlpool and lure good sailors down by the sound of wet harp-strings. Hark'ee, there's one aboard who will have it he saw such a sea-maid last night rise out of

the foam; and her face, so he swears it, was like unto this royal maid's.

Gouvernayle. Out on him for a knave! And on you who would traffic in such crazy chatter.

Master. I am not to blame. *I* saw her not. And as for your maids who dwell on shore, fair or foul, I fear not one. For them, your sailor was ever your true, fit mate. He loves 'em and he leaves 'em. That's the royal way of love as we sailors count it; and marvel only that kings should choose otherwise. And yet there be some of 'em so cunningly fashioned that not all the sea spilt on the round orb shall serve to keep honest men from the harm of 'em.

Gouvernayle. To your work, good Master. To your work and leave this idle babble. Dost hear me?

Master. Aye, aye, sir!

[*Turning again to the* SAILORS *as he goes up stage.*

Yare! Yare, my hearts! Steadily! So!

[TRISTRAM *comes down and meets him as he goes up.*

Tristram. Is your helm set for the land?

Master. Truly, my Lord, and we shall make it speedily. The wind sits in the quarter. Cheerly, my hearts! Cheerly! [*Goes up and out of sight.*

Tristram. [*Pointing back to group of* SAILORS *as he approaches* GOUVERNAYLE.] Did'st hear these fellows? They are all a-hunger for the land again who, while they were on shore, would sing of nought but the sea.

Gouvernayle. So was it ever, my Lord. 'Tis not what is, but what is to come that gives savour to life.

Tristram. For them it may be, but 'tis not so here. What's lost is all that's left. Neither what is nor what may be can bring aught to me.

Gouvernayle. Nay, nay, my Lord, thy master's love awaits thy coming.

Tristram. Yet that, too, were nigh being lost. Aye, that remains. I have kept mine oath; and these eyes that were like to have been lowered in shame may now greet my Lord the King once more in fearless wise.

Gouvernayle. How think you she will greet him?

Tristram. Most royally, as doth become the daughter of a King.

Gouvernayle. Yet since that hour thy hand struck Palamide to the earth she hath never uttered word.

Tristram. 'Twas that same hour first taught her what I am.
For her these hands are red with Moraunt's blood;
Small wonder then she is dumb. Yet those veiled eyes
That fall when I pass by as though they shunned
Some sight that soils them, soon shall lift their light
To greet this new-won glory.

Gouvernayle. So they should.
Yet oft-time I have feared her dumb lips guard
Some darker purpose!

Tristram. Wherefore think you so?

Gouvernayle. Last night when all was blackest here she stood
With fearless eyes fixed on the raging sea,
And when the gale ran shrieking through the shrouds,
And all had thought the ship must part in sunder
So wildly blew the winds, 'twas then I saw
A smile upon her face as though she owned
Some kinship with the storm.

Tristram. Was Brangwaine there?

Gouvernayle. Close by her side; fast holding to her breast
That carven cup which Oren, Ireland's Queen,
Hath sent as bridal offering to King Mark.

Tristram. May be she dreamed of him!

Gouvernayle. Aye, but what dream?

Tristram. Or haply smiled to think though death should come

'Twould come for all, and first of all for him
Whose hated image blackens out the past.

Enter BRANGWAINE, *bearing in her hand a carven cup.*

What would you, Lady?

Brangwaine. Good my Lord, my mistress
Did bid me ask of thee what course we make
And if the end be near?

Tristram. Aye, very near!

Gouvernayle. See what new-sweetened breezes fan our sail,
Within the hour we shall be safe in port!

Brangwaine. I thank thee, Sir!

Tristram. Is she so eager, then,
To greet her new-found Lord?

Brangwaine. My Lord, I know not;
I have but done her bidding.

Tristram. So shall we all!
For is she not our Queen? Go, tell her then
The trouble of the toiling sea is over,
The land draws near at last.

[*He goes up to the fore-part of the ship, leaving* BRANGWAINE *and* GOUVERNAYLE.

Brangwaine. So Heaven be praised!
That hath saved us from this peril. Once I feared
Last night might prove our last; and the white seas
Would swallow ship and all!

Gouvernayle. Nay, fear no more,
Neither for her nor for that royal gift
Those hands hold fast. Is it so finely wrought,
This wedding cup, thou bearest to our King?
Nay, but I'll warrant you our Cornish craft
Can match its carven wonders!

Brangwaine. Haply so!
Then count the cup for nought! Yet count it all;

For, sealed within it, lurks a precious draught
Sweeter than sweetest wine, and were that lost
Then all perchance were lost, and nought but shame
Should wait on those we serve! [*She sets down the cup.*
Gouvernayle. What shame can touch
My Lord, Sir Tristram? Who with stainless brow
And faith unshaken, bears across the seas
This royal bride?
Brangwaine. None, Sir, if but that bride
Cleave closely to her Lord.
Gouvernayle. What? Think you then
Her heart might turn again towards him whose sword
Proclaimed him what he was? That peril's past:
Sir Moraunt's blood hath set a crimson cord
'Twixt her and him that bars the way of love,
And shall for ever bar it, God be praised!
When first Iseult beheld that splintered steel
My heart leapt up within me, for I knew
Whatever softer thoughts once filled her breast
That sword had slain! And only hate dwelt there.
Brangwaine. Haply thou art right, yet in a maiden's heart
It sometimes chances, though she knows it not,
That love and hate lie closely side by side.
So we are fashioned.
Gouvernayle. Aye, and so would wreck
The souls of men who dream, because ye are weak,
That they, forsooth, are strong. Is there no cure
For this accursed thing the world calls love?
Brangwaine. Aye, Sir, the cure lies there! There in that cup!
'Tis love must conquer love, nought else beside
Can break its fetters. So Queen Oren deemed—
Whose cunning hands distilled that magic wine
Wherein Iseult and Mark shall pledge their troth.

•

For when they have drunk of it, from that day forth
Those twain shall cleave together heart to heart
And soul to soul, till at the last Death comes
To end what else were endless. Say you then—
Have I done well to guard this carven cup?

Gouvernayle. Yea, truly, all the wine of all the South
Were not so precious! Knows thy lady this?

Brangwaine. Nay, by mine oath I am pledged to hold it from her
Till all be sure! She doth but know she is sworn
To do her mother's bidding. Look, she comes!

Enter ISEULT.

Iseult. What saith the Lord of the ship? May we not know
What course we make?

Brangwaine. Sweet mistress, all is well.
Our journey nears its end!

Gouvernayle. Nay! Rather say
'Tis ended now; the wind sets towards the land
And we are home!

Iseult. Why then I pray you, Sir,
Bear him our thanks.

[GOUVERNAYLE *goes forward to the fore-part of the vessel.*

Brangwaine. See, where on either side
The shore puts forth an arm to hold us safe
From the waves' onslaught!

Iseult. Nay, I love the waves.
The shore is all I dread. Had I my will
I would the sea were landless, that our ship
Might sail from dawn to dark, from dark to dawn,
And find no port!

Brangwaine. Last night indeed I feared
That fate might well be ours!

Iseult. Was it so?
Stood death so near?

Brangwaine. Sweet lady, very near.
But now the night is past.
Iseult. Ah, call it back!
For I would see once more that fairer face
That greets me as mine own. 'Twas there last night,
There, while the storm ran riot through the skies.
With fearless feet, across the foaming floor,
She drew towards me, till those snow-white hands
Were raised above my head. 'Twas then I cried
"Stretch forth an arm and touch me." "Nay, not yet—"
So came her answer back—"Not yet, not yet!
I heal all wounds and thou all wounds save one.
Thou dost not need me yet." And as she spake
A sudden silence fell upon the sea,
The conquered waves went sobbing back to sleep
And, with the dying whisper of the gale,
She passed into the night, till nought was there
But those white hands uplifted in the dark,
Like two twin sails that winged their way to Heaven.
Would I had found that way!
Brangwaine. Ah, speak not so!
Those phantom spectre shapes that pace the night,
Can harm thee now no more, the clouds are past!
The storm is spent, and see! a new day dawns.
Iseult. Aye, all too soon!
Brangwaine. Too soon? Hast thou forgot
What glory waits thee there?
Iseult. Nay, Brangwaine, nay!
I do remember all.
Brangwaine. Then lift thine eyes
That, in a little space, shall there behold
That royal Lord who waits to crown thee Queen.
Art thou not named the fairest of the earth?
Then let him find thee so!

Iseult. And so he shall.
Bring me my robe.

[BRANGWAINE *takes the royal robe that is set ready and puts it upon the shoulders of* ISEULT.

Fair raiment makes all fair—
Yet in thine eyes I see there's something lacking!

Brangwaine. Dear lady, no!

Iseult. Aye, but I know there is!
Within our woods once grew a milk-white flower
That bore a poisoned berry! Were it here
I'd bind it round my brows: its beauty then
Would fitly sort with mine. But this shall serve!

[*She takes the diadem which* BRANGWAINE *holds out to her and sets it on her brows.*

What say you? Am I fit to mate with him
Who rules in Cornwall?

Brangwaine. Never king on earth
Yet won so fair a bride!

Iseult. But we forget!
There's one thing more. Where is Queen Oren's gift
To him who waits to crown me?

Brangwaine. [*Pointing to cup.*] It stands there.

Iseult. Then set it ready and those goblets too.
He may not halt nor tarry who, to day,
Would pledge his troth with mine!

[BRANGWAINE *takes the goblets and places them on either side of the carven cup. Without turning* ISEULT *calls to her.*

Come hither, Brangwaine!

[*With eyes fixed upon her face,* BRANGWAINE *approaches her, half in terror.*

What is it lurks within that carven cup?

Brangwaine. Sweet wine, dear mistress!

Iseult. Aye, and in the wine?

[illegible]

Brangwaine. [illegible]

Iseult. Yea, but I am, and I [illegible] aright.
It was King Mark struck Morough to the earth!
Tristram but held the blade; the blow that fell
Came from his master's hand. Is it not so?

Brangwaine. Iseult, I may not answer Yea or Nay,
For so my lips are sealed! Thy mother's word
Must stand for all. Yet haply that same dream
Shall have a sweeter ending.

Iseult. There is none
That can be half so sweet. For, once these hands
Have done her bidding, life is naught to me,
Who am borne across the seas, a captive bride,
To this proud Lord I know not. Death alone
Can heal that wound I bear!

Brangwaine. Iseult! Iseult!
Drink deep and have no fear.
Iseult. How should they fear
That have no hope? Go call Sir Tristram hither.
Brangwaine. Sir Tristram!
Iseult. Aye, Sir Tristram, so he is named.
Did'st thou not say we neared our journey's end?
'Tis fitting then we pay our fee in thanks
To him who hath borne us here!
[BRANGWAINE, *who has gone up, now returns*
Why dost thou pause?
Brangwaine. Look well his lips touch not that magic wine.
It was not brewed for him.
Iseult. Now that one word
Had I known naught beside, would tell me all.
Nay, death is not for him. Go, call him here.
[BRANGWAINE *goes up to the fore-part of the vessel, and as she does so* ISEULT *goes to the bench where stands the cup and pours the wine it contains into the two goblets. While she is doing this the voices of the* SAILORS *singing are heard again from the fore-part of the ship.*

Sailors' Chorus.

What calls us home,
Home from the sea?
Sailors are we,
Sailors and free
Sea-ward to roam,—
What calls us home?
Grey eyes and blue,
Red lips and true,
Old loves and new!—
Straight o'er the foam,
Love calls us home,
Home from the sea.

Iseult. Love calls ye home! Nay, Sirs, 'tis hate, not love
That steers your good ship now! [TRISTRAM *comes down.*
Ah, thou art here?
Tristram. Did'st thou not send for me?
Iseult. [*With a touch of scorn in her tone*]. Most like I did!
I am thy Queen and may command thee, Sir.
Tristram. In all things, to the end.
Iseult. That end draws near.
So Brangwaine told me.
Tristram. Brangwaine told thee well.
Straight on our course Tintagel's mitred towers
Already carve the saffron fields of dawn.
The wind and storm have made the journey weary;
But all is over now.
Iseult. Not yet, my Lord.
'Tis thou dost rule this ship? Is it not so?
Tristram. Yea, truly!
Tseult. So I thought, and all obey thee.
Then bid these sea-worn mariners who sing
Of love and home, go put the helm about,
And flee the land!
Tristram. I fear that may not be!
Iseult. Why not, when I command thee?
Tristram. There is one
That doth command us both.
Iseult. Thy Lord, the King?
Is that what stays thee? Not in all the world
Was ever master yet so humbly served!
Thou needs must love him well!
Tristram. As thou shalt too
When he hath crowned thee Queen!
Iseult. Then tell me, sir,
Was it thy love for Mark that bade thee bring
This shame upon our land?

Tristram. What shame?
Iseult. What shame?
So then thou hast forgot that Moraunt died.
Tristram. I would I could forget.
Iseult. Thou can'st not! No,
Nor we who are his kin, and saw him die!
Think then it was forgotten in that hour,
When 'neath thy stronger arm, Sir Palamide
Fell stricken to the earth?
Tristram. I think not so!
Iseult. Nay, but King Gormon's oath still left thee free,
Who else had paid death's forfeit! Aye, 'twas so!
And then, when fearing naught, thy lips dared ask,
What he might not refuse—think you that Time
Had laid to sleep the bitter memory
Of Moraunt's death?
Tristram. Indeed, I think not so.
For well I know that bitter memory
Still lives to-day, and shall outlast all time.
Iseult. And, yet for all, thou still would'st serve thy King?
Tristram. As needs I must! 'Tis all that's left to me.
Iseult. Then, of thy love for him that is so great,
Go put the helm about and flee the land!
Tristram. I cannot!
Iseult. Cannot? Hearken then to me:
That oath of vengeance sworn so long ago,
Were I not all too weak, had long ago
Been satisfied. Thy valour saved thee then!
Thy valour and King Gormon's plighted word.
Yet know, though thou art free, that oath endures,
And the sword's point that found the servant armed
May haply strike his master.
Tristram. What means this?

Iseult. Dost see that cup? It is my mother's gift:
To Mark the King. And that sweet wine it holds
My Lord and I shall drink in joyous pledge
Of our betrothal.

Tristram. Nay, I know it well.

Iseult. Yet know'st not all. Read what is writ
thereon:

Tristram. [*Holding the cup in his hand.*] "Those twain
who drink of this sweet wine shall dream
An endless dream that knows no waking here."

Iseult. Canst thou not guess that dream? I'll tell
thee then:
'Tis death!

Tristram. What sayest thou, Death?

Iseult. Aye, in that wine
Lies life's one secret none can ever know
Till Death unbars the door, and Death waits there!
'Tis naught to me, for life is naught to me!
And happy naught to thee whose life is safe!
Yet thou dost love thy King.

Tristram. And dost thou think
That I would shield myself and slay my Lord?

Iseult. Then put the helm about and flee the land.

Tristram. There is a better way.

Iseult. What way?

Tristram. Ah, why
When I lay stricken on the verge of death,
Why did'st thou heal that wound which but for thee
Had wrought thy vengeance then?

Iseult. I know not!

Tristram. Why,
Why did'st thou stay thy mother's vengeful hand,
More merciful than thine, that would have slain me?

Iseult. I know not! Nay, I know not!

Tristram. Then I'll tell thee.
Thy deeper love for Moraunt, who had died,

Dreamed of a deeper shame for him whose sword
Had struck him down. Yea, well thou know'st 'tis so!
Set in thy heart there dwelt this fiercer hate;
"'Tis not enough that this poor knight should die!
Nay, he shall live, and bear upon his brow
The brand of coward, traitor, and what else
Shall link his name with endless infamy!"
So had'st thou dreamed; but so it shall not be!
For here I bare my breast and take that blow
Was meant for him I serve! Strike hard and deep!
Thou hast no pity left—those healing hands
Should own their sterner office.

Iseult. Nay, I cannot!

Tristram. Doth hate so move thee still? Why, see you then
I am no traitor! *This* shall make amends.
For here in full atonement for what's gone
I drink that poisoned cup was meant for him,
My Lord.

[*He goes up stage and seizes one of the goblets. She makes a movement to stop him, but as she does so he drains it down.*

Iseult. Ah, no!

Tristram. Tis done! Iseult, farewell!

[*He comes down stage with eyes gazing outward as one waiting the call of Death. As he stands there she moves softly up stage and drains the other cup.*

Iseult. "Whom thou hast healed, him shalt thou wound again."
So this then is the end! Tristram, farewell!

Tristram. What hast thou done?

Iseult. As thou hast! Fare thee well.

[*They stand apart and in silence as the voices of the* SAILORS *are heard at the back softly singing. During the chorus the faces of*

TRISTRAM *and* ISEULT *reveal the soft beginning of the mystic spell that is working within them, and as they stand, their faces gradually transfigured, the light increases till the scene is flooded with a golden dawn.*

SAILORS' *chorus.*

New breezes spring
Across the foam,
The Swallow's wing
Is spread for home!

Day shines afar
And night is past,
The harbour bar
Is won at last!

Tristram. They sing of day!
Iseult. Yet 'tis the night that comes!
Tristram. Yea, truly, so it is. Then hasten, night,
Unbar this golden prison men call day!
Iseult. Nay, look again, it hath the grace of dawn;
The stars are flushed with crimson, and the sky
Holds some new light I know not.
Tristram. Through the dusk,
The way shines clearly that shall lead us on.
And who are they that wander hand in hand
Within that shadowy wood? They come in troops,
With cheeks still wet with weeping! Who are they?
Iseult. I see them not! Thou hast gone on before
Where I must follow thee. Ah, now I see!
They also trod the way that waits for us!
Wilt thou too take this hand? All's over now,
It cannot harm thee more!
[*She holds out her hand, he takes it in his.*
Tristram. It healed me once!

Iseult. And wounded thee again! Aye, past all cure!

Tristram. The cure is here at last. Look where the sea
Breaks into flower and all the whitened foam
Is strewn with blossom! Spring is here again!

Iseult. Can this be Death's rough road?

Tristram. An' if it be,
Then Death and Life are one, and Death and Love!
For, look you, Love stands there; with rose-crowned brows,
He passes 'midst those shadowy forms, whose eyes
Are lifted up to greet him as he goes!

Iseult. Oh Death, come quickly; end what needs must end!

Tristram. "Those twain who drink of this sweet wine shall dream—"

Iseult. "An endless dream that knows no waking here."

[*She leans towards him, her head sinking on his breast as the chorus is repeated softly.*

Day shines afar,
The night is past,
The harbour bar
Is won at last.

Tristram. Aye, won at last!

Iseult. At last! It was no dream!

Tristram. Iseult, I love thee!

Iseult. As I love thee too,
And shall for ever love thee!

Tristram. From this hour
We twain shall cleave together heart to heart.

Iseult. Aye, soul to soul, till Death indeed shall come
And sweetly end us both!

Enter BRANGWAINE *who sees the empty goblets, and comes in terror to* ISEULT'S *side.*

Brangwaine. What hast thou done?
Iseult. Nay, ask what have we won?
Brangwaine. Ah, woe is me!
That ever I was born into the world!
Sorrow and shame await thee.
Iseult. Love is here!

[GOUVERNAYLE *comes rapidly to* TRISTRAM'S *side.*

Gouvernayle. My Lord, we are safe in port.
Tristram. Aye, safe in port!
Gouvernayle. The King is here to greet thee.
Tristram. 'Tis the King!
Brangwaine. [*To* ISEULT.] It is thy Lord. Dost hear me?
Iseult. Aye, my Lord!

[TRISTRAM *and* ISEULT *stand apart as though in a trance, meanwhile the sail has been lowered and discloses the raised prow of the ship thronged with* SAILORS *and with* KNIGHTS *and* DAMES. *The song of the* SAILORS *breaks out joyously.*

What draws us home,
Home from the sea?
Grey eyes and blue,
Red lips and true,
Old loves and new;
Straight o'er the foam
Love draws us home
Home from the sea.

[*Through the song come shouts and cries from the crowd at the back, which makes way at the approach of* MARK, *who steps on to the*

ship from the quay, "The King!" "The King!" "The King is here!"

[TRISTRAM *and* ISEULT *still stand motionless as* MARK *comes between them.*

Mark. Welcome, Sir Knight, and thou my peerless Queen.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

THE WOUND INCURABLE.

SCENE I.

SCENE:—*An apartment in* KING MARK'S *Castle at Tintagel. Window to R. with entrance above it. Entrance L. Doors C.*

Enter R. ARGANTHAEL, *and her* WAITING WOMAN.

Arganthael. [*To* WAITING WOMAN.] Go to my chamber, and await me there. If one should ask for me, hold him close and bear me word of it.

Waiting Woman. I will, my lady. [*Exit L.*

Enter ANDRED *R.*

Arganthael. Is the King returned?

Andred. Aye, and keeps his room, vowing he will see none but Tristram.

Arganthael. Who is not here.

Andred. Yesterday at noon Sir Tristram rode to the chase, and hath not since been seen.

Arganthael. Say you so? Our woods are rich in game and Tristram loves the chase.

Andred. Truly, and yet he would not hunt by night.

Arganthael. Who knows he would not?

Andred. What mean you?

Arganthael. That you shall know to-night. For the time the King must see no one—nor Tristram, nor these Lords who now accuse us.

Andred. They wait to see him now.

Arganthael. So let them wait. Doth he yet know the charge they bear against us?

Andred. Aye, and says no word; yet in his silence lies that which threatens more than speech. There's nought can save us now. All that we schemed 'gainst Tristram is blazoned through the land. 'Tis known we held back the news of Gormon's oath that day he set sail for Ireland. Yet that's not the worst; for we may not now deny that; while he tarried there, we openly accused him of treason to the King.

Arganthael. And if we still could prove it?

Andred. Yea, but we cannot.

Enter WAITING WOMAN.

Waiting Woman. Madam!

Arganthael. What is it now?

Waiting Woman. There's come one from the forest who doth plead
To see thee instantly.

Arganthael. What like is he?

Waiting Woman. A poor mis-shapen thing that scarcely tops
The stature of a child, yet on his face
Stands a swart growth of beard.

Arganthael. At last! 'Tis he!
Go bear him to my room. [*Exit* WAITING WOMAN.

Andred. Who is this hind?

Arganthael. 'Tis the dwarf Ogrin, who's but half a man,
Yet very cunning in all woodland craft.
He bears us hither news of Tristram's hunting
The King may care to learn.

Andred. What can he know?

Arganthael. Something beyond our hope, beyond our dream.
Last night, as the moon rose, a stranger Lord

Sought the Queen's forest bower where none hath leave
To break the lonely vigil that she keeps
In grief for Moraunt's death.
Andred. Where doth this tend?
Arganthael. Art thou so blind, my Lord, and can'st not see
The net draws close at last? This stranger Lord
Is Tristram.
Andred. Tristram!
Arganthael. Aye, Sir, it is he
Who 'neath the moon doth visit Iseult's bower
Night after night; and this mis-shapen dwarf
Who tracked him there shall lead us there again
To-night, with Mark.

Enter MARK.

Mark. Hath Tristram not returned?
Arganthael. Not yet, my lord.
Mark. 'Tis strange!
Arganthael. Nay, not so strange.
Oft-times of late he hath ridden forth alone.
Mark. Where is Sir Dinas?
Andred. He and all his crew
Wait there without.
Mark. I'd have Sir Tristram here,
Here close beside me, when these angry Lords
Appear before us! So the world shall know
That constant love we bear him. And ye too!
Ye too shall know it! Our resolve is fixed,
From this day forth it is the King that speaks!
Let all who have sought to use our majesty
For ends that are their own, look to themselves!
Their cause is none of ours. What would'st thou say?
"It was the King who urged thee?" Then thou liest!

And so these Lords shall learn! There is no word,
No word these lips have uttered that hath breathed
Aught evil against Tristram.

Andred. Not one word.

Mark. Thou can'st not say I have not loved him well!

Arganthael. Nay! All too well! Would Heaven he had deserved
One tithe of that great love!

Mark. Thou knowest he does
And well I know it too.

Andred. Thou knowest it not!
Tristram is doubly false!

Arganthael. Yet speak no word;
'Tis best to hold our peace. Though he be false
The King still loves him. Wherefore then should we
Destroy this worshipped image, though it bears
Naught but the painted mimicry of truth!

Mark. Ah, Madam, this poor trick shall not avail thee,
He hath been tried too well, and with each trial
His fame but shines more brightly. There is nought,
And sooth I know it now, can prove him false!
Nor greed of gold, it hath no gleam for him;
Nay, nor ambition, for it tempts him not!
Nor fear, whose valour stands beyond reproach!

Arganthael. It is not always fear that makes men false.

Mark. What is it, then, should move him?

Arganthael. In that hour,
When Eden's blossom turned to sudden fruit,
She, from whose sin our world hath its beginning,
Left to all time to come one fatal dower
Which since hath wrecked the world: that poisoned cup
Of deadly sweetened wine, which whoso drinks
Is oft-times fearless, aye, and oft-times false!

Mark. What lurks beneath thy speech? I'll know
thy thought
Though I should tear it from thee: speak, I say!
Arganthael. Thy Royal bride Iseult is fashioned fair
Beyond all dream of beauty!
Mark. Well, what then?
Arganthael. Is it not strange such beauty breeds not
love?
That all her days should pass in ceaseless grief
Which still delays that happier hour when thou
Shalt share her couch?
Mark. What's done is by our leave,
Who see in this great love for Moraunt dead,
The promise of still richer love for us
When grief shall yield to joy.
Arganthael. 'Tis a sweet thought.
Andred. Yet what, Sir, would'st thou say if thou
should'st know
Her chamber door, that is shut close on thee,
Lies open to another.
Mark. 'Tis not true!
Arganthael. Yea, but it is: and that same valiant lord
Who nightly wins his way to her embrace
Once slew her brother Moraunt!
Mark. Tristram?
Arganthael. He!
Mark. This is some plot to snare me.
Arganthael. If it be
Then thou shalt judge us both.
Mark. And so I will,
And tear ye limb from limb!
Andred. Go forth to-night,
Approve it on the warrant of thine eyes!
Mark. Or prove thee false!
Arganthael. I do repent me now
That aught was said. Though haply she be false

Still she is fair! Why then, forget all else!

Mark. Enough! Thou hast said enough! The very thought
That other lips than mine have tasted hers,
Doth gnaw and rankle like a poisoned wound
That tears my heart. Yet, were that wound half cured
Could I but know for sure that he was base!

Arganthael. And so thou shalt.

[*She goes to door and speaks to her* WAITING WOMAN.

Bid Ogrin come to me!

Waiting Woman. Madam, I will. [*Exit.*

Arganthael. To-night beneath the moon.
Thou'lt find him in her bower.

Enter OGRIN.

Mark. What shape is this?

Arganthael. A creature of the forest, who knows well
Each winding path that hunters love to tread.

[*To* OGRIN.

The King would find Sir Tristram, whom he loves,
Think you your craft can set us on his trail?

Ogrin. Aye, if to-night he chance to take again
The way he took last night.

Mark. What way was that?

Ogrin. The way to the Queen's Bower.

Enter HERALD.

Herald. My lord!

Mark. What now?

Herald. Sir Dinas waits your pleasure.

Mark. Tell him, then,
At noon to-morrow we'll receive him here.
And say this more, that justice shall not halt
Where'er the bolt may fall.

[*Exit* HERALD.

Andred. The sun is down.
The forest lies afar!
Mark. Command my horse!
[*Exit* ANDRED.
[*To* ARGANTHAEL.] Dost thou ride too?
Arganthael. Aye, surely, to the death.
And when the hounds have killed, why then, my lord,
I'll ask a boon of thee.
Mark. And so thou shalt
If by the fickle guidance of the moon
We chance to find the quarry!
Arganthael. As we shall!
[*They move to doors as the scene changes.*

SCENE II.

SCENE:—ISEULT'S *bower in the forest. The entrance that leads to the dwelling is down stage R., and the dwelling itself is either wholly hidden by trees or merely suggested by a portion of the turret seen above the trees. Beyond this entrance rises a rocky eminence down which is a practicable path that leads to the stage. It is overgrown with trees, through which the rays of the moon fall on the scene. This rocky mound forms the nearer bank to a little stream that falls behind it and flows across the scene from R. to L.; and another bank rises beyond and projects further on to the stage. In the centre a shelving bank borders the stream which lies here in a quiet pool, and then flows on till it falls into the bay that is seen between the trees on L. There are no entrances on L. which can be treated as though the rocks rose again with the stream running beyond*

them downwards to the bay. The general effect of the scene is of an enclosed dark woodland bower intersected by a rivulet.

At the opening of the scene ISEULT *is discovered in the moonlight. She lies crouched down upon the shelving bank, her face half in profile, with her eyes bent upon the stream. By her side stands* BRANGWAINE *watching her mistress. Throughout the scene* BRANGWAINE'S *manner has something of fateful forewarning. In the opening lines* ISEULT *has forgotten her presence and, without turning, calls as though to summon her from the dwelling.*

Iseult. Come hither, Brangwaine!
Brangwaine. Mistress, I am here!
Iseult. Come watch with me awhile; these eyes are worn
And dazed with gazing in the swirling stream
Yet dare not quit their office. Full an hour,
Like some poor shipwrecked mariner who scans
The desert main to find a friendly sail,
They have swept the surface of this tiny sea—
And all in vain!
Brangwaine. What is it seek they there?
Iseult. Love's messenger, a little ship that sails
Night after night and bears upon its prow
Its master's name that is my master's too!
[*She takes from the bank beside her some slips of notched olive wood, and holds them up to* BRANGWAINE.
See, here's a fleet of them; all safely docked,
Their voyage done, they lie in haven now.
[*As she speaks she counts them over one by one.*
This was last night! And this the night before!

And this, and this—Nay, I'll not count them all.
Frail craft in sooth! Yet never argosy
Bore such a golden freight!
[*She points upward to the cliff from which the stream descends.*
They're put to sea
In yonder upland pool beyond the rock;
And, when the torrent bears them into port,
I know Sir Tristram's there, and doth but need
My call to bring him hither. Every night
He sends this signal and then waits to find
The light that guides him homeward; but to-night
No ship comes o'er the main and in my heart
Springs up a nameless fear!

Brangwaine. What fear? What fear?

Iseult. There is but one! None else in all the world
But just that one—that Tristram may not come.
It was to-night he said?

Brangwaine. Aye, 'twas to-night,
Is it not every night?

Iseult. And if it is?
Yet every night renews that self-same fear
Lest last night were the last. The shadow, there,
Had scarcely kissed that stone when yester-eve
My galleon came to shore; and now it falls—
Slanting athwart the stream.

Brangwaine. Be sure he'll come!

Iseult. I would I could be sure! For that's love's pain—
Its joy is never sure! And even here,
Here in this tiny sea, a storm may grow
And scatter all!

Brangwaine. Aye, truly so it may!

Iseult. [*With sudden vehemence turning upon* BRANGWAINE.] Nay, it may not! There is no storm that blows

Can wreck our love!

[*Then suddenly changing to a softer mood.*

Come watch with me again.

[*She bends once more over the pool as* BRANGWAINE *kneels by her side.*

Dost see that feather fallen from the breast
Of some lone dove? How gallantly it floats!
Ah! little ship sail on, for haply thou
Art also golden-laden and dost bear
Love's message too! And there a star-shaped flower
The stream hath kissed too roughly. See, 'tis drowned.
Is that an evil omen! No, ah, no!
My ship is safe in port! Safe, safe in port!

[*With a cry of joy she leans over and draws from the stream a little piece of notched olive wood which she holds dripping in the moonlight. She rises from the bank and shows it to* BRANGWAINE.

See here, and here, my master's name and mine
Carved rudely in the bark! Then he is here!
Sir Tristram's here at last! Now I could wait
An hour, a day, a year, and when he came
Still vow 'twas all too soon! Ah, but I could!

[*Then with a sudden change of mood.*

Go quickly, Brangwaine. Quickly, dost thou hear?
And set the lamp within my turret chamber.
Add that one star to those that deck the night—
Love's star that leads him home. Then hasten back.
'Twould seem a year if I should wait alone
Till he be come!

Brangwaine. When once that lamp is lit
'Twill not be long to wait.

[*Exit R.*

ISEULT *alone.*

Iseult. Aye, but it will!
An age! an age! And then, when he is by,
The hurrying hours, racing toward the dawn,
Will seem but one brief moment! Only one,
Yet all a lifetime's there: for love is there!
At whose command this little hidden bower
Glows like a lighted palace in the gloom,
And every darkened alley of the wood
Holds up a fairy lamp. Then, when he's gone,
Those envious shadows, that Love held at bay,
Creep o'er the narrow empire of the moon
And all grows dark again!

[BRANGWAINE *returns softly,* ISEULT *hears and half in fear calls without turning.*

Iseult. Whose step was that?

Brangwaine. Nay, fear not, it is I. The lamp is lit:
He will not tarry now.

[ISEULT *stands watching her own shadow cast by the moon upon the grass.*

Iseult. Draw nearer, Brangwaine:
Dost see that image printed on the grass?
That is Iseult! Look you, she's lonely now—
Yet, if we watch awhile may be we'll see
Another image creep beside her there.

[BRANGWAINE *draws closer so that her shadow falls beside that of* ISEULT, *who half playfully motions her away.*

Nay! Nay! Not thine, but his! And when I see
That shadowy Iseult uplift her face
Then I'll lift mine, and haply I shall find
His lips upon mine eyelids! Until then
I will not stir nor breathe!

Brangwaine. Iseult! Iseult!
Last night I saw another shadow there
That was not his nor thine!

Iseult. [*Half in terror.*] What dost thou say?

Brangwaine. Ye twain were gone within and I remained,
Watching alone here, close beneath this tree
Whose lacing branches patterned by the moon,
Lay like a broidered dream upon the grass;
So still was all the night! Yet, as I gazed
Amidst those silent shadows there was one
Bent and mis-shapen like a twisted bough
That shifted from its place; I dared not move,
Nay, scarce dared breathe, for in the dumb night air
My breathing found an echo.

Iseult. [*Clinging to her.*] What was there?

Brangwaine. I know not; for that echo died away
And from the forest came a whispered sound
As though a panther crept o'er fallen leaves
Then all was still again!

Iseult. 'Twas nought but that!
Ah! fright me not to-night! Some vagrant beast
Had stepped across the pathway of the moon—
It was no more.

Brangwaine. Pray Heaven it was no more,
For all my days are haunted by the fear
Of ill that may befall thee. It was I,
And woe the hour!—who set that fatal draught
Ye drank and thought was death.

Iseult. And through Death's door
Passed out to sweetest Heaven! The drink was nought,
Nought but a sign that made the dumb to speak,
The deaf to hear, and freed two prisoned souls
That else were bound for ever. It was life.
Aye, life, not death, thou gavest us to drink!
What else is life but love.

[*During this speech, which she utters in a sort of subdued ecstasy, standing a little apart from* BRANGWAINE, TRISTRAM *has softly descended the rocky path and now*

approaches them unseen by either. But as he nears them his shadow falls between them, and at sight of it BRANGWAINE *starts back with a cry of terror.*

Brangwaine. 'Tis there again,
Death's shadow in the moon!

Iseult. Nay, coward heart,
That shadow is my shadow! 'Tis my Lord!

[*He draws closer to her, and she turns with uplifted face and falls into his arms.* BRANGWAINE *turns to* TRISTRAM.

Brangwaine. I crave thy pardon. [*Aside.*] Heaven shield them well!

[*Exit R.*

Iseult. My life!

Tristram. Iseult!

Iseult. And I who fondly feared
Thou would'st not come to-night!

Tristram. Thou know'st full well
There's nought but death could stay me. Was it she
But now who spoke of death?

Iseult. Nay, heed her not.
She hath a foolish thought that yester-night
She saw a crooked shadow in the moon
That crept into the forest.

Tristram. Said she so?

Iseult. But it was nought, I know it!

Tristram. Nay, 'twas he,
Orgin the dwarf, who spied upon us here!
I saw him as I went!

Iseult. Then all is known!

Tristram. Or shall be! For what else is left to tell
The world may never know: 'tis buried deep,
Locked safe within our hearts.

Iseult. Ah, hold me close!
Nay, closer, closer still! Thy heart to mine—

That when the hour be near, each separate pulse
May cease in one.

Tristram. Iseult! My Queen, Iseult!
The end draws very near! In that pale dawn
We thought 'twas death we drank, and so it was:
For love like ours, that swallows up all life,
Dwells on the verge of death. This earth's poor day
Cannot contain it, and the boundless night,
Where every path is set with golden stars,
But leads us onward to that larger world
Whereof death holds the key.

Iseult. Nay, Tristram, nay!
This world was thine! Thou wast its conqueror,
And, but for me, had lived, its worshipped Lord:
'Twas I held up that cup!

Tristram. And I that drank,
Who else had died of thirst! These lips were parched
Till they touched thine. These hooded eyes were blind
And knew no beauty till they gazed in thine!
There was no world for me—all was but void,
Till love flung wide the doors and led me here—
Here next thy heart!

Iseult. Art thou indeed content?
Though Death o'ershadow us, art thou content?
I may not ask for more!

Tristram. There is no more!
Who owns thee, owns the world! What else is left,
In that poor realm that paupers count as life,
Now lies unheeded, and its shattered laws,
Made for a starveling race that knows not love,
Read like a crazy scribble on the wall
That fences round our Heaven.

Iseult. And I, who feared
That mine was all the joy, and thine the pain!
With us love must be all: there's nought beside—

Nor law, nor life, nor duty, nay, nor death!
I did not dream it could be all to thee:
That is my Heaven now!

Tristram. And here is mine!

[*He kisses her upturned face.*

Iseult. Is this the last? The last?

Tristram. And if it be,
Yet count it as the first. For in that hour
When death's pale shadow overspread the dawn,
We thought the first was last. There is no end
And no beginning to a love like ours—
Which, still unwearied, is new born again
With each encounter; so that now it seems
These lips till NOW had never clung to thine:
The first and last are one! Love's deathless flame,
Sprung from the void long time ere time began,
Had sped through countless æons e'er it fused
Our hearts in one; and shall burn brightly on
When time and life are spent.

Iseult. My Lord! My King!

[*She sinks upon his breast and they remain clasped in a long silent embrace as the softer music reveals an undernote of terror and forewarning. Her face is turned upwards so that the moonlight falls upon it. As they stand so* OGRIN *and* MARK *followed by* ANDRED *appear upon the mound and are seen stealthily descending the rocky path. As* OGRIN *steps into the rays of the moon the light upon* ISEULT'S *face is suddenly darkened:* TRISTRAM, *who is gazing down upon her, feels by this sign the presence of the* KING, *and with a shuddering start rouses the half swooning* ISEULT. *Neither turn, yet each is conscious of what is there as, without a word, they draw asunder;*

and as they do so the shadow of MARK'S *form falls between them. Silently he approaches, and as he nears them* ISEULT *passes to* TRISTRAM'S *left and* ANDRED *descends and comes to the right of the* KING. OGRIN *remains on the path crouching beneath a twisted tree. All this is in dumb show, and when words come, they come slowly and almost in a whisper.*

Mark. At last!

Tristram. At last!

Mark. I have waited for this hour,
Yet never dreamed 'twould come.

Tristram. And I, my Lord,
Have seen it coming with the measured tread
Of Death.

Mark. Of death! So thou dost think to die?

Tristram. That fate that drew me here cries out for death
For death and life are one! and Life and Love!

Iseult. Then, Death, come quickly! End what needs must end:
I shall not falter.

Mark. [*With suppressed intensity.*] And thou shalt not die!
That were too swift a vengeance. Nay, nor thou,
Most valorous knight! If ought should ail thee now,
Were it no graver than a bloodless scratch,
I'd pray that sorceress, there, to heal the wound—
So thou should'st live for ever! And for ever,
With endless shame, still feed my endless hate.

Tristram. Ay, endless hate! For I have earned no less!
Yet, in thy larger heart where love once dwelt,
Some grain of noble pity, lingering still,
Should bid thee end us both.

Mark. Where love once dwelt?
Dost think then that I loved thee?
Tristram. Well, I know it!
As now I know too well that love is dead.
Mark. Nay, Sir, 'tis newly-born. For this one hour,
That sets thee at my feet, doth almost breed
The love I once but feigned. Thy glory then,
Robbed me of all the love of all the land:
For that I loathed thee and both night and day
Prayed for thy death. But now, this sweeter chance
That lays thee bare before me, yields all back—
I owe thee thanks for that! Therefore live on,
Hated and spurned by those who worshipped thee.
Is not this mercy?
Tristram. Thou art not the King!
But some poor shadow that usurps his place.
This is not he whom once I thought to serve,
For whom these lips once drained that fatal cup
I deemed was death! Nay, this is not the King!
Mark. It is the King indeed!
Tristram. Had I but known!
Then, when I worshipped thee, had I but known!
Yet all in vain; for in that sceptred hand
Still stands the symbol of eternal law
Which sets a canker in the sweet wild rose
That rebel lovers press between their lips.
There is thy victory. We yield thee that—
Who else had all the world! [*Turning on* MARK.
But now this last account betwixt us twain
Sets my sword free. For wrong here answers wrong,
And death shall claim us both.

[*As he advances upon* MARK, ANDRED, *who has crept up behind him, runs him through the back with his sword.*

Andred. [*Aside.*] Not yet, my Lord,
'Tis thou alone must die and, by thy death,
End all my craven fears.

[TRISTRAM, *without a sound, staggers back and falls upon the bank.* ISEULT *throws herself upon her knees at his side, as the scene darkens, leaving but a glint on the central figures.*

Mark. So I am spoiled
Of half my vengeance.

Andred. Nay, Sir, had he lived
Perchance thou had'st lost all. He knew thee well!

[*They creep off silently by the path on which they descended, leaving* ISEULT *and* TRISTRAM *alone.*

Iseult. My Lord, my Lord, look up!

Tristram. I can but see
Death's shadow in the moon! 'Tis here at last!

Iseult. Nay, 'tis not night that comes! It is not night!

Tristram. Aye, truly, but it is! Then hasten night,
Unbar that golden prison men call day.

Iseult. Ah, look again, it hath the grace of dawn,
The stars are flushed with crimson, and the sky
Holds some new light I know not!

Tristram. Through the dusk
The way shines clearly that shall lead us on;
And who are they who wander hand in hand
Within that shadowy wood?

Iseult. Ah! take this hand.

Tristram. It healed me once! I do remember well.

Iseult. And wounded thee again. Yea, past all cure!

[TRISTRAM *takes her hand.*

Tristram. Nay, but 'tis marble-white. Its touch is cold!
Then it WAS death that lay within that cup!
Yet, were it here, I'd drink of it again
To win thy love again.

[*He falls backward, and* ISEULT *throws herself on his breast.*